

12, 1995, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GOSS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we are facing this weekend is the 30th birthday of Medicare. Many of us have been trying to talk about this issue in quiet voices because we think 30 years old is not old enough for Medicare. We would like to see it survive and survive in a very healthy mode.

One of the things that we found out yesterday was the gentleman who put together the "Harry and Louise" commercials and did everything they could to derail, and did derail, health care reform, was given a lecture that somebody taped, so we were able to hear it yesterday.

The point of the lecture was what to do to scare people about Medicare so they would stampeded, and you could raid that little piggy bank to use it for the tax cuts that the other side wants to use it for. As we watched, almost everything we heard on that tape is coming true today.

What I am trying to say is that on the 30th anniversary of Medicare's birthday, that people should be very mindful of what is going on. There are big, big, big economic interests circling around Medicare that cannot wait to get their little mitts on it.

First of all, there are a lot of people talking about if you really cut it and you try to find a way to downsize this whole thing, the first trick will be to lure the healthy out, to transfer them out into the private sector. That is why I think so many private insurance companies have been willing to fund this group that is going to go out and say "Oh, we have got to change Medicare to save Medicare."

You know what will happen and I know what will happen. They will lure those healthy people out but the minute that they get sick, I will bet you no one will get an insurance policy that guarantees renewal no matter what their health condition. You can lure them out, make money on them, and the minute they get sick, boom, transfer them back over to the Federal Government or cut them off and leave them hanging out there. That is where I think we have to look to see where it is that we are going.

When this lecture was given that we got to hear yesterday, they were say-

ing that the only way you could get people to change the status quo was to scare them, scare them to death, and so we see people waving these reports around that the Medicare trust fund is in trouble. No one will ever stipulate that it has not got some problems. Yes, it has got some problems, and this side of the aisle has been dealing with those problems year after year after year.

The way we deal with them is you look at the number of beneficiaries, you look at the cost of the care, you try to see if there is anything you can do to streamline, get the waste out or whatever, and then any savings you get, you plow it back into that trust fund.

The question I have to those waving this report saying how much trouble Medicare is in, how terrible it is going to be if we do not do something, the question I have for them is then why are they proposing that they should take \$270 billion out, not plowing it back in, but taking it out? If it is already in trouble, where is the scenario where just removing the funds is going to make it healthier? I think it only puts it on a faster downhill trend, but I think they are hoping people only hear parts of the message and do not think it all the way through to the end.

As we get ready to celebrate this birthday, and I guess one of the reasons I feel so strongly about this birthday is it is the same birthday as mine, but as we get ready to celebrate this birthday for the 30th anniversary of Medicare, I am saying to people, please listen carefully. Please ask questions about why some companies will put so much money up, to do everything they can to agree to take all this money out of Medicare.

Maybe it is because they think they are going to be enriched if they can get that to happen, that they are going to make some money out of it. I really rather doubt that they are putting all this money up for this big PR effort because they are doing it just in the name of good government or just as a charitable contribution or something they would like to do for older folks. I think we really have to pierce the veil of those kind of entities and find out who is standing behind them and find out if they stand to be enriched if these things transpire.

I think playing with people's trust funds is just too scary. There are too many problems and too many people who really distrust the Federal Government to add this to their list of things that make them angry. Most people like Medicare. Let us hope it is still in as good a shape as it is now on its next birthday.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. DORNAN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. DORNAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

SAVING MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the 30th anniversary of Medicare. Over the past 30 years, this program has provided essential health care coverage to many seniors. Yet today Medicare faces imminent bankruptcy.

President Clinton's own Social Security and Medicare boards of trustees, which include three appointed Cabinet members, issued their annual report this last April. I have a copy right here. In this report, they indicated that the Hospital Insurance Trust Fund will be able to pay benefits for only about 7 more years. By the year 2002, seniors who depend on this program as their primary source of health care will lose coverage unless we act now to protect Medicare.

Let me share the conclusion from this report. This is President Clinton's report, his trustees:

We strongly recommend that the crisis presented by the financial condition of the Medicare trust funds be urgently addressed on a comprehensive basis, including a review of the program's financing methods, benefit provisions and delivery mechanisms.

I have heard little or nothing from the minority party as to how to fix it. They have criticized the Republicans but they have not offered any specific methods to fix this problem.

We have two options: We can either do nothing and allow Medicare to face bankruptcy or we can strengthen, simplify and save Medicare.

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We must strengthen this program by making it financially sound and safe.

Mr. Speaker, the current growth of Medicare is unsustainable. Instead of continuing to increase spending at 10 or 11 percent each year, we must slow the growth to about 7 percent. Even under this plan, spending for each beneficiary will increase from \$4,800 per year to \$6,400 by the year 2002.

We must simplify this program and make it easier for seniors to use. We must reduce fraud and abuse in Medicare. We must give seniors the right to choose their own health plan. We must go beyond the scare tactics. If we take immediate action now, we can save Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, this is indeed the 30th birthday of Medicare. We on this side of the aisle say "Happy Birthday" and many more.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. WISE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]